

NEW SOLAR HOMES PARTNERSHIP

HOME BUILDER'S CASE STUDY

Premier Homes



PROJECT

Premier Gardens - Sacramento, CA

Premier Gardens, Sacramento County's first Zero Energy* subdivision, was completed in early 2005 by Premier Homes Properties, Inc. The neighborhood consists of 95 energy efficient homes, with five unique floor plan designs ranging in size from 1,285 to 2,248 square feet. Branded as a "Premier ProEnergy Community," the all-solar community was designed to offer entry level buyers a number of standard energy saving features and cut home energy bills by as much as 50 percent.

Located close to Highway 50, with the Sierras to the east, the Bay Area to the west, and the American River minutes away, Premier Gardens ensures all the conveniences that accompany such a coveted central location.

MAKING THE DECISION

Offering solar *"became an opportunity to set ourselves apart as a small builder,"* said Kevin Yttrup, president of Premier Homes. *"We felt the market would need more energy efficiency in California as time went on."* Having offered solar electric systems as an optional upgrade in previous communities, Premier Homes has been committed to energy efficient construction for more than a decade.

Premier cites California's energy crisis and the ongoing rise in utility bills, particularly in summer months, as major factors in consumer demand for energy efficient homes. At a time when advancements in solar technology had gained momentum, and consumer interest was peaking, *Premier sought to establish itself as an industry pioneer paving the way for energy efficient homes.*

CHALLENGE

As a small builder, the high upfront cost of offering solar was a concern for Premier. However, because the community opened for sale during the height of the housing boom, it became clear that justifying the additional \$10,000 to \$15,000 to buyers was futile at a time when every community had lengthy waiting lists.

SOLUTION

Premier was able to address the aesthetics issue by *installing roof-integrated panels which were virtually unnoticeable.* The rebates and tax breaks offered by the state helped bring down the per home cost of adding solar panels and SMUD further subsidized the project with \$7,000 per home and provided \$20,000 in marketing support. With a marketing campaign, the builder was able to increase traffic to the community and educate buyers on the benefits of choosing an energy efficient home.

* Premier Homes is part of the Department of Energy's Zero Energy Home program. A Zero Energy Home combines state-of-the-art, energy efficient construction and appliances with commercially available renewable energy systems such as solar water heating and solar electricity. This combination can result in net zero energy consumption from the utility provider. The Zero Energy Home program formed the foundation for the New Solar Homes Partnership.

Premier Homes

"Premier Gardens is a unique opportunity for first-time home buyers to live in an extremely energy efficient home that will provide them with a solid value, both now and in years to come."

— Kevin Yttrup, president of Premier Homes

PERFORMANCE RESULTS

Premier chose to distinguish Premier Gardens from neighboring communities by marketing it as an *energy efficient community for entry-level buyers with an emphasis on the cost savings potential*. Rather than offering granite countertops, Premier made solar PV systems standard, along with high-efficiency furnaces and air conditioners, tankless water heaters, high-performance windows and better insulation. Although homes in the area sold for similar prices, *home owners in the Premier community paid an average of \$600 less per year on their energy bills* compared to home owners in standard construction homes.

All of Premier Gardens' homes meet the Department of Energy Building America goal for today's Zero Energy New Homes with a 60 percent reduction in power drawn from the grid and reduced natural gas consumption. SMUD certified the homes as SMUD Solar Advantage Homes, which means the homes exceed the current California Title 24 Building Standards energy cooling requirements by as much as 30 percent. In addition, the homes meet state ENERGY STAR® Homes requirements.

PREMIER HOMES

With more than two decades of combined experience in distinctive custom home building, Kevin Yttrup and John Stewart, along with their team of experts at Premier Homes, bring a vast amount of experience and a unique sense of understanding to the individual needs of their buyers. Premier Homes has built a reputation for exceeding the needs of individual buyers — a reputation based on creating distinctive and diverse homes that bring both value and prestige to their customers, the community and the region.

specifications

CITY: Sacramento, CA
OF SOLAR HOMES: 95
SOLAR PROVIDER: GE Energy
UTILITY: Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD)
AVERAGE SYSTEM SIZE: 2 kW
ANNUAL ENERGY PRODUCTION: Estimated 3,330 kWh
MODULE TYPE: 48 GE Energy GT 55 BIPV
INVERTER: SMA Sunnyboy 2500 Inverter